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ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

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EPA PRESENTS ENVIRONMENTAL EXCELLENCE AWARDS TO LOUISIANA WINNERS

Today the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) honored individuals and organizations from Louisiana for their outstanding environmental achievements at an Environmental Excellence Awards ceremony at the State Capitol in Baton Rouge. Lynda F. Carroll, acting deputy regional administrator for EPA's Region 6 office, presented the awards, and J. Dale Givens, secretary of the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), gave the opening and congratulatory remarks.

"I am honored to present these awards for excellence to such outstanding individuals and groups, representing both the private and the public sectors, where commonly dedicated to preserving the environment in Louisiana," Carroll said. "This includes public and private officials, team members, and of course, the operations personnel at the management and staff level whose support is vital to attaining and maintaining our environmental goals."

"EPA's Region 6 Environmental Excellence program is in its twelfth year, and we are extremely proud that many more qualified organizations are competing for awards. This makes our job of selecting the best ones more challenging, which is great. We are impressed that this year's winners have done a lot to educate the public on becoming more environmentally responsible, and that more organizations are effectively using partnerships to build on previous experiences, share information, and extend resources."

Today's award recipients are:

- The Savoy-Swords Water System, Inc., in Eunice, for consistently providing safe, quality drinking water to a rural area at a reasonable price. One-on-one operator education, an emergency response program, and good communications with their customers contributed to overall excellence in operating and maintaining a public water supply system.
- The Carlyss Waterworks, in Sulphur, for developing and implementing a wellhead program that has been especially effective in locating abandoned water wells that might allow contamination into the aquifer supplying the system's water wells. The entire district staff became involved in this enthusiastic team effort.
- The city of Lake Charles for implementing an outstanding wellhead protection program. The Water Production Division staff developed an extremely effective outreach program to involve the entire community in efforts to educate the public and businesses about the importance of protecting ground water.
- The Shell Chemical Corporation's Geismar facility for success in dramatically reducing air emissions of

ethylene oxide and ethylene glycol through a series of recycling and pollution prevention activities. More than 600 tons of the two substances are now recovered instead of being released to the environment.

- The Rapides Parish Police Jury in Alexandria for successfully implementing an aggressive waste reduction and pollution prevention education program. As a result, the Rapides program has diverted almost 21% of the community's typically generated solid waste to waste reduction and recycling efforts. The program focused on educating the entire community about pollution prevention and getting them involved in the recycling activities.

Five Partnership Environmental Excellence Awards were presented to representatives of the three organizations that jointly developed and implemented the innovative Circuit Rider Program in the Lake Pontchartrain Basin in partnership with the Environmental Protection Agency. This innovative program focuses on identifying and addressing water quality problems in the basin through an outreach effort that provides on-site training to operators of small wastewater treatment plants. This compliance assistance has been both successful and cost effective. The Partnership for Environmental Excellence Awards were presented to:

- Louis Johnson, administrator of DEQ's Water Quality Management Division;
- Carlton Dufrechou, executive director of the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation;
- Jeff Waters, program manager for the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation;
- Larry Cotton, program specialist for the Louisiana Rural Water Association; and
- Tom Walton, circuit rider for the Louisiana Rural Water Association.

"The environmental leadership demonstrated to earn this recognition helps set an example for others to follow in protecting Louisiana's environment," Givens said in congratulating the winners. "It also shows the positive things that can happen when residents, government, and industry work together toward environmental protection. Governor Foster and DEQ greatly appreciate the extra efforts of the organizations and individuals to whom these awards are being presented."

Ms. Carroll presented a special plaque and an EPA Environmental Excellence flag to each winning organization, and a lapel pin to each individual on the winning teams. The flag's colors are symbolic, with blue representing clean air and water, green representing a clean earth and white representing purity. The two Es on the flag stand for Environmental Excellence.

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